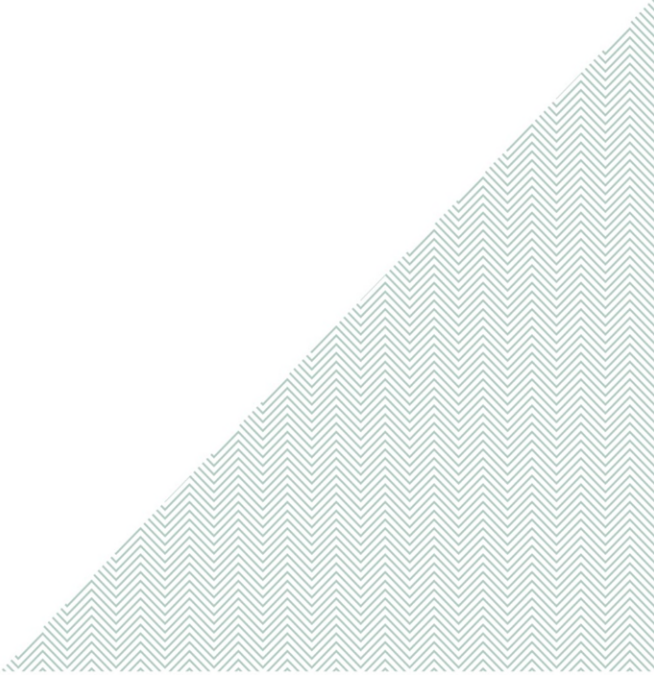


COMPLAINTS POLICY



STONEHAGE
FLEMING

NOW AND FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

COMPLAINTS POLICY

Stonehage Fleming Law Limited (“SFL”) is committed to the provision of high-quality legal services and client care. However, in the event of your being dissatisfied, you are entitled to complain. This will help SFL improve its standards and ensure that in future you are getting the service you deserve.

1. HOW DO I COMPLAIN?

1.1 If you are dissatisfied with the service that you have received or wish to complain about a bill received from us, please contact us with the details. You may wish to raise the complaint with the lawyer you engage with in the first instance. If you would prefer to speak directly to our complaints officer, you should send details of your complaints to Nitzan Olsha on 020 7026 5460 or by email to nitzan.olsha@stonehagefleming.com

1.2 If Nitzan has led your matter, please contact Len Durham on 020 7087 0140 or by email to len.durham@stonehagefleming.com.

1.3 SFL will have eight weeks within which to consider your complaint. If we have not resolved it within this time you may complain to the Legal Ombudsman, an independent complaints body established under the Legal Services Act 2007, that deals with legal services complaints. The Legal Ombudsman contact details are provided below:

Legal Ombudsman
PO Box 6167
Slough
SL1 0EH

Telephone: 0300 555 0333

Email: enquiries@legalombudsman.org.uk

Website: www.legalombudsman.org.uk

1.4 Note that the Legal Ombudsman service cannot be used by businesses or most other organisations, unless they are below certain size limits. Further details are available from the Legal Ombudsman’s website. [Home](#) | [Legal Ombudsman](#)

1.5 The Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) can help you if you think a solicitor might have breached the Code of Conduct or SRA Principles. Reports can be made through the SRA website. Visit the SRA for more information:

[SRA | Reporting a solicitor or firm to us | Solicitors Regulation Authority](#)

1.6 If you have any form of special needs which may require a particular method of communication please let us know, and we will do all we can to accommodate you.

2. WHAT HAPPENS ONCE SFL HAS RECEIVED YOUR COMPLAINT?

2.1 We will send you a letter acknowledging receipt of your complaint, and setting out our understanding of it within 3 days of us having received your complaint. We will also let you know the name of the individual who will be handling your complaint. In most instances the complaint will be dealt with, in the first instance, by Nitzan Olsha or another director.

2.2 We will then begin investigation of your complaint. This will generally involve reviewing the matter file and speaking with the solicitor(s) who acted on your behalf. We may, if necessary, ask you to provide us with further details and/or information.



- 2.3 We may then invite you to a meeting (which might be an online meeting) to discuss and, hopefully, resolve your complaint. If we do, we will advise you within 14 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter.
- 2.4 Within 5 working days of the meeting we will write to you and confirm what took place at the meeting and any solutions or further actions we have agreed with you.
- 2.5 If you do not want a meeting, or it is not possible to hold a meeting, we will send you a detailed written reply to your complaint, including our suggestions for resolving the matter, either within 28 days of sending you the acknowledgement letter or, where we have asked for further information, within 14 days of receiving that information from you. If we require more time to investigate your complaint for any reason, we will notify you and confirm when we will next contact you.

3. WHAT IF YOU ARE STILL NOT HAPPY WITH SFL'S RESPONSE TO YOUR COMPLAINT?

- 3.1 You should contact us again and we will arrange for someone unconnected with the matter at SFL to review the decision. We will inform you in writing of who this will be.
- 3.2 We will write to you within 14 days of receiving your request for a review confirming our final position on your complaint and explaining our reasoning.
- 3.3 If you are still unhappy with SFL's decision, you can contact the Legal Ombudsman via the details provided at paragraph 1.3 above.
- 3.4 It is worth considering, whilst it is open to you to submit a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman, they apply strict criteria to determine whether they will ultimately accept a complaint for a full investigation. They have the discretion to dismiss or discontinue all or part of a complaint if they believe:
 - 3.4.1 it does not have any reasonable prospects of success.
 - 3.4.2 you have not suffered (and are unlikely to suffer) significant financial loss, distress, inconvenience or detriment.
 - 3.4.3 it is frivolous, vexatious, lacks merit or where there is a compelling reason not to accept it.
 - 3.4.4 the likely impact, size, complexity, scope, volume of evidence or your conduct render it disproportionate/unreasonable/impossible for the complaint to be investigated.
 - 3.4.5 you have previously complained about the same issue to them, unless you provide material evidence that is likely to affect the outcome which only became available to you after you submitted the original complaint.
 - 3.4.6 there has been undue delay in the complaint being raised.
- 3.5 Also note:
 - 3.5.1 If, during the course of an ongoing investigation by the Ombudsman, a revised/increased offer is made by us which is deemed to be fair and reasonable redress and you decide to reject that offer, the Ombudsman has the discretion to dismiss or discontinue all or part of your complaint.
 - 3.5.2 If you have already accepted an offer to settle your complaint made by us during our internal complaint handling process, which is deemed to be fair and reasonable redress,



unless there has been some significant intervening act, you will not be able to have that agreement overturned in the hope of securing a preferential outcome by pursuing your complaint via the Ombudsman.

3.5.3 For more information on the Legal Ombudsman's rules and requirements, please see their Scheme Rules dated April 2023. [Scheme Rules | Legal Ombudsman](#)

4. IS THERE A TIMEFRAME WITHIN WHICH I MUST COMPLAIN TO THE LEGAL OMBUDSMAN?

4.1 The time limits for referring a complaint to the Legal Ombudsman are:

- Within one year of the date of the act or omission being complained about; or
- Within one year from when the complainant realised there was a concern.

4.2 Complaints referred to the Legal Ombudsman must be done within six months of our final response letter.

5. IF I AM NOT HAPPY CAN I CHALLENGE A BILL ISSUED BY SFL?

5.1 You can apply to the court for something known as a detailed assessment of the bill under Part III of the Solicitors Act 1974. You may wish to take legal advice before you apply to do so as you may have to pay the costs of the assessment.

5.2 If you have applied to court for an assessment, the Legal Ombudsman may not consider your complaint about the bill unless the proceedings are put on hold by the parties agreeing or by court order. The Legal Ombudsman may also dismiss a complaint about a bill if it would be more suitable for the issue to be dealt with by a court.

5.3 The court can examine the whole bill and can either approve it or reduce it. You will have to pay further costs to use this procedure, but if the court decides to reduce the bill by more than one-fifth, you will not pay the costs of assessment.

5.4 You should apply for an order for assessment within one calendar month from the date you receive the bill. If more than one month has passed, the court may order that the bill be assessed, but if more than twelve months have passed, the court will only make an order in exceptional circumstances. If you have paid the bill in full more than one year before the application, the court has no power to make an order, even if there are exceptional circumstances.

5.5 You should be aware that SFL may be entitled to charge interest if all or part of our bill(s) remain unpaid.

5.6 An experienced adviser's help, for example, at a Citizens Advice Bureau, will usually be needed to assess whether you should challenge a solicitor's bill.

REVIEWED BY	DATE REVIEWED	CHANGES MADE	APPROVED BY
Chris Durham	May 2024	Update to Legal Ombudsman address. Incorporate recommendations made by Access Legal Compliance	SF Law Board – Q2 2024
Chloe Smeeth	27 April 2023	Updated timescales to comply with changes to Legal Ombudsman scheme rules	Vivian Haines – July 2023



